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# *On Behalf of Black Families*

The problems of black families have been thoroughly researched; what is the next step toward a solution?

# *Clarence Mitchell, Jr. and Benjamin Mays; An Appreciation*

Each man proved that "One, on God's side, is a majority."

# *The People's Platform for 1984*

The principal author of the *People's Platform* explains what it is, why it is needed, and what will be done with it.

# *Blacks on the Move: Trends in the 1980s*

Blacks' trek to the suburbs continues apace, but their return to the South—first noted in the 1970s—may have been short-lived.

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# Perspective

Ironically, but not surprisingly for students of the black community, the major catalyst for the recent upsurge in black political participation has been the Reagan administration. Most blacks view its policies and actions as disastrous and threatening. This perception is reinforced by the unsettling effects of the nation's economic upheavals and by a national conservative mood that appears to be indifferent to civil rights.

This widespread perception of being victimized has intensified the phenomenon of *black consciousness* to an extent not seen since the 1960s.

Social psychologists describe black racial consciousness as a sense of shared hardship imposed by the white-dominated society through racial discrimination. One study describes the dynamics of racial consciousness in these words:

> the idea that each individual is responsible for his or her own successes and failures in life . . . weighs particularly heavily on the poor and racial minorities at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy who have traditionally been shackled with guilt for their own poverty. . . . By drawing attention to their status as a deprived and oppressed group, black consciousness helps blacks to replace the more negative overtones of the Protestant work ethic with a "system-blame" ethic. . . . The result is a heightened sense of personal efficacy and an increased mistrust of the political system.

Rightly or wrongly, the Reagan administration is seen as the architect of the current hardships blacks face. To the extent that the administration makes vividly clear the gulf between the interests of blacks and the direction of "the system," it builds black consciousness—and this is what is manifest in the reawakening of black political activism.

This new political mood, then, confronts us with two critical factors, *efficacy* and *mistrust*.

A "sense of personal efficacy" is the most important determinant of voter participation among Americans. It can override the attitudinal handicaps that inhibit participation by low-income blacks who otherwise are the least likely to register and vote.

The importance of a sense of efficacy produces a self-perpetuating cycle: the more successful the black community is in getting political influence, the more black political participation should increase. There is evidence that the cycle has begun. Registration and turnout among blacks have been unusually high during the past several years, particularly in the campaigns of Harold Washington, Wilson Goode, and Jesse Jackson—candidates with a real chance of winning office or at least gaining substantial influence.

But the other side of the coin is increased *mistrust* of the political system.

Obviously, mistrust is not a healthy attitude, and it can turn the cycle in the opposite direction, reducing political participation and thus the political efficacy of the black community. Mechanisms that dilute the impact of the black vote increase mistrust of the system, as does evidence that the black vote is either taken for granted or written off.

Mistrust can be overcome by education, by involvement, but most of all, by hard evidence that the system, and those who run it, are responding seriously to the concerns of blacks and other minorities.

What all this means is that the current upsurge in black political participation is not a temporary phenomenon; it will have important and long-term implications for black political behavior. The black vote will not go away after the November elections, and it is none too early to start thinking about where we are going in the long run.

**Eddie N. Williams**
**President**

**FOCUS**

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# Mitchell and Mays: An Appreciation

**by John Britton**

*(The author is director of public affairs for the University of the District of Columbia.)*

*The roll was called.* In Baltimore, Clarence Mitchell, Jr. closed his eyes and, at age 73, made the ultimate transition. Grief struck former presidents, presidential candidates, senators, congressmembers, governors, state legislators, mayors, city councilmembers, educators, family, neighbors—just plain folks throughout the land. The "101st Senator" of the United States had served his final term. He left monuments: public policies and laws that have set men and women free in the Home of the Brave.

*The trumpet sounded again.* In Atlanta, Benjamin Elijah Mays, president of Morehouse College, answered and moved on. Morehouse men wept. A nation mourned. Death, a process that begins with the first breath of life, had claimed "Buck Benny" in his 89th year. Surviving him are his contributions, real American treasures: The lives he molded; the souls he touched.

**Shared Blessings**

Little in the public record suggests that Dr. Mays and Mr. Mitchell were confidants. Yet the elegance, style, and grace that characterized the life and work of both men would indicate that they shared the blessings of a single Force. Both men possessed uncommon intelligence, extraordinary courage, a disarming wit, and an uncompromising commitment to justice and fair play.

Their secret of success was their mastery of the art of communications. During his college years at Lincoln (PA) University, Clarence Mitchell anchored a university debating team that challenged the best and the brighest of Oxford—an unheard of feat for a black college in those days.

But it was as Washington director for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and chief lobbyist for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights that Mr. Mitchell delivered his most effective speeches—to presidents in the Oval Office and to legislators in Congress. He frequently had the ear of the powerful, whispering to them the agenda of black America. Some balked. Others bowed to superior reasoning. The results, on balance, are impressive.

And one of the products of Mr. Mitchell's attention to legislative matters even involved Dr. Mays. Mr. Mitchell's first major victory came with passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 which, among other things, established the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Dr. Mays was slated to be named to the commission during the Kennedy administration. But the intransigence of Georgia's Democratic senators, Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell—both peeved at Mays' uncompromising stance against segregation—intimidated the White House and blocked the appointment.

Clarence Mitchell, Jr. compiled an enviable record of success in the face of powerful opposition from men who, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, inflamed the nation with talk of interposition and nullification. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is testimony to the durability of the Mitchell shoe leather. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 evidences the effect of Mitchell arm-twisting, aided by the uncommon interest of the nation's chief executive. The Civil Rights Act of 1968, which established fair housing policy, is a monument to the Mitchell perseverance and determination.

Dr. Mays was equally adept at persuasion. He was a prolific writer, respected for his contributions to theology, his principal academic discipline. Moreover, he claimed the attention of the masses through a popular column published for years in America's black-owned newspapers.

But it was in person that he most frequently melted resistance to his ideas, alternately using a powerful intellect to appeal to reason and a fiery oratory to summon whatever morality and compassion his listeners might possess.

Such was his power of persuasion that many old Morehouse men can quote almost verbatim the inspirational sermons that the Rev. Dr. Mays delivered at chapel assemblies each week. Such was the power of these sermons that even today Morehouse men offer the logic learned from Mays to defend one or another of their commitments.

In his lifetime, Mr. Mitchell developed paths of direct access to power in the nation's capital. Dr. Mays' influence was a bit more indirect and his impact was a degree more subtle. He molded the minds of impressionable college students and sent them from the Atlanta campus to use well what he had taught them.

Morehouse men fanned across the nation, enrolling in graduate and professional schools, excelling, graduating, and then contributing significantly to a society that could no longer deny their energy and know-how. Martin Luther King, Jr., for one, entered Morehouse determined to pursue a career in law. The Mays philosophy swayed young King and, by his own admission, inspired him to continue a family tradition in the ministry.

Numerous examples of the Mays/Morehouse tradition live still through the life and works of those stirred by the man. What he, through them, has given a race and a nation is summed up nicely in a phrase turned by Morehouse graduate Lerone Bennett, Jr., who cited the "certain dark joy" that augments the strength of a people who have suffered disproportionately.

**Working Together**

Mitchell helped to change laws that kept black men and women in bondage and white men and women enslaved to a myth. Mays sent forth an army of black leaders capable of taking full advantage of the opportunities emerging from the public policies Mitchell advocated. In this sense, the two men worked together.

Both men also obeyed to the letter W. E. B. DuBois' assertion that every insult must be challenged on the spot; that black men and women must accept the moral imperative to struggle against an immoral system that supports racism. When Mitchell was pursuing a graduate degree at Atlanta University, he became known in the city for his vocal opposition to the Ku Klux Klan and for walking everywhere he chose to go because he refused to sit at the back of the bus.

Dr. Mays was equally well known for preaching to his students about the sin of abiding segregation

*(Continued on page 5)*

# The People's Platform

**by Francesta E. Farmer**

*(The author, former executive director of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, is a fellow at the John F. Kennedy Institute of Politics at Harvard University.)*

The National Black Coalition for 1984, an ad hoc group of some 50 black leaders, scholars, and elected officials, has issued the *People's Platform*, a detailed statement of black objectives and strategies for the 1984 election year. Meeting in Atlanta in March 1983—eleven months before the first primary—the group decided that the development of a cohesive black perspective, and a test by which to evaluate *all* presidential candidates, was as important as traditional efforts to register and mobilize voters.

Everyone present was concerned that the "rightward drift" of politics in America, signaled by the Reagan victory in 1980, might push black issues even further off the political agenda during this critical election year. The group agreed to form an *ad hoc* coalition—the National Black Coalition for 1984—under the leadership of Dr. Joseph E. Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and to issue the *People's Platform* in cooperation with the National Black Leadership Roundtable, a coalition of over 300 black organizations, headed by Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy (D-DC). M. Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition, also played a major role in developing the *Platform*.

**What the *People's Platform* Is**

The *People's Platform* begins with a call for a "new realism, a new responsibility, a new politics, and a new dream." It reflects, the introduction says, "the awakening power of the black vote; our unyielding opposition to the negative economic, social, foreign, and military policies of the current administration... and our demand for change."

The recommendations fall into nine critical policy areas: the role of government; employment; the economy; minority business development; welfare and income security; education and training; civil rights; defense, foreign policy, and nuclear disarmament; and urban policy. In each of these nine sections, a statement of principle precedes an analysis of the effects federal policies have had on black people since President Reagan took office. Where appropriate, the *Platform* also explains the effects of these policies on the lives of citizens who are not black; clearly, what is happening in black communities will also happen elsewhere unless there is a fundamental reordering of national priorities.

Then the *Platform* outlines specific recommendations to remedy problems identified in the analyses. The National Black Coalition for 1984 is now collecting data on the costs and likely benefits of each recommendation that calls for federal expenditures; this task already has been completed for several key proposals within the *Platform* (for example, the Skills Development Corporation retraining initiative). Coalition members believe they can strengthen recommendations by demonstrating that they can be financed without increasing the enormous federal deficit and may, in fact, return much-needed revenues to the federal government.

***Platform* Highlights**

The following are statements of principle and major recommendations from each section of the *Platform:*

*The Role of Government.* "The nation [must] commit itself anew to a reordering of national priorities that places human needs and investment in human capital ahead of development of . . . weapons of awesome destructive capability."

Recommendations in this section call for a restoration of federal budget expenditures on human needs—particularly the needs of the youngest, the oldest, and the poorest Americans—to FY '81 levels, adjusted for inflation. Other recommendations urge the creation of new health care programs; federal minimum benefit levels for AFDC; increases in child care subsidies; improvements in programs for child nutrition, food stamps, unemployment compensation, and elder Americans; and a wholesale review of regulatory changes that unduly penalize the poor.

*Employment.* A "war on joblessness" is the only adequate response to the acute crisis of unemployment in the black community. For decades, black unemployment has been more than double that in the white community, both in good economic times and bad. In 1982, one out of every three black Americans was unemployed for all or part of the year, contributing in large measure to an increase in the poverty rate for blacks. At 35.6 percent, the black poverty rate is the highest of any racial or ethnic group in the country. Clearly, this is the greatest crisis facing our communities, and recent upheavals in "smokestack" industries can only lead to a worsening of this trend in the near future.

The *Platform* recommends the establishment of a $20 billion Skills Development Corporation that would train persons living below the poverty line and place at least 300,000 of them each year in occupations where there are labor shortages. Additionally, "the government must assume the responsibility of becoming the employer of last resort by creating short-term, but useful, employment."

*The Economy.* Rejecting "Reaganomics" and its "trickle-down" theories, the *Platform* recommends coordinated economic planning. Such planning would include a new industrial policy that combines community revitalization, efforts to bolster declining but critical industrial sectors, and government encouragement of new technologies—all coordinated by a new Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Another component of this comprehensive economic plan would be "a more fair and rational tax system," including a 15 percent minimum corporate tax.

*Minority Business Development.* Minority businesses, including farms, are essential to the nation's economy. As such, they can play a major role in revitalizing local economies and in creating new jobs for black Americans. Yet current policies impede their growth and development. For black farmers, the crisis is particularly acute: it has been estimated that at present rates of decline, black farmers will virtually disappear by 1990.

The *Platform* recommends the adoption of measures such as targeted tax incentives to encourage the private sector to invest in and do business with

minority firms. A proposed "Minority-Majority Merger Program" would facilitate this collaboration. Other recommendations include an end to the forced removal of some minority businesses from the Small Business Administration's Section 8(a) program, which permits them to bid on specially set-aside government contracts, a 100-200 percent increase in federal loan support and procurement opportunities for all minority businesses, and stepped up support for black farmers.

*Welfare and Income Security.* "The current welfare system is outmoded and needs to be reformed." Urging extensive changes in the welfare system—principally AFDC—the *Platform* demands an end to the cycle of dependency and dissolution that the system currently imposes on black families. At the same time, the document categorically rejects "workfare" and other punative aspects of current program requirements. Instead, it explains, the welfare system should emphasize training for meaningful employment.

*Education and Training.* All Americans are concerned about a loss of excellence in education. For black Americans, this loss has been compounded by the federal government's retreat from its role as guarantor of an equal and quality education for all.

The recommendations: more, not less, money must be spent—particularly on mathematics, science, and computer studies; black colleges, too, must be helped: perhaps through a quasi-public corporation capable of raising funds for black colleges and encouraging collaborative strategies for their growth and development; inner-city schools must be targeted for increased funds and support for bilingual and bicultural education and for efforts to employ and retrain chronically unemployed youth and adults.

*Civil Rights.* "Civil rights laws and guarantees must remain a critical national priority. We are alarmed by the erosion of vigorous federal enforcement of these laws . . ."

Recommendations in this area include: vigorous enforcement of existing civil rights laws; passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and the Economic Equity Act; a rational and fair immigration system that retains full due process and judicial review; enforcement of *all* provisions of the Voting Rights Act; and a commitment to meaningful affirmative action.

*Defense, Foreign Policy, and Nuclear Disarmament.* Current and projected levels of defense spending rob the nation of vital resources for investment in human capital and in genuine national development and skew our foreign policy so that it is more confrontational than in any recent peace-time era.

Current U.S. policies toward Central America are disastrous; military solutions cannot be substituted for serious attention to the more significant causes of unrest in this neighboring region—causes that are primarily economic, political, and social.

The *Platform* recommends major reductions in defense spending, particularly for destabilizing strategic and nuclear weapons that threaten world peace and raise the spectre of nuclear annihilation. In place of a foreign policy founded on east-west confrontation, it suggests a more progressive approach—a productive dialogue with countries of the Third World about the problems they face. The *Platform* also urges an immediate repudiation of "constructive engagement" and other collaboration with the racist *apartheid* regime of South Africa.

These steps must be coupled with greater integration of the nation's foreign policy establishment. More minorities and women must be given key policy-making positions.

*Urban Policy.* Over 75 percent of all Americans live in urban areas. A disproportionate number of these Americans are minorities, poor, and poorly educated. Centers of commerce and culture, cities cannot be neglected as they have been in the past three years. We need a comprehensive urban policy.

Among other things, the federal government should end block grant distributions that penalize cities to benefit suburban areas, allocate revenue sharing funds to communities with demonstrated need, bolster infrastructure aid, and return housing production to levels that revitalized cities in the 1970s.

**Use of the *Platform***

Completed in September 1983, the *People's Platform* has been sent to all declared presidential candidates with a request that they respond to its specific recommendations. The candidates' responses will be widely publicized to inform voters of the candidates' views.

So far, emphasis on most of the problems plaguing American blacks has been conspicuously absent from the campaign. The time has come to remedy this neglect. And, as the *Platform* notes:

> because these issues are critical to many others, this platform statement—while embodying our hopes and aspirations—also can become the basis for a coalition effort to reorder national priorities; to meet the needs of all citizens; and to ensure that fairness, equality, and justice pervade our public policies . . .

Copies of the *People's Platform* can be ordered for $3 from Ms. Lezli Baskerville at: 2041 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave., S.E., Suite 311, Washington, D.C. 20020.

## Mitchell and Mays *(Continued from page 3)*

when there was no need to. Travel between home and school was a necessity, Mays observed, and government laws failed to protect black Americans from segregation. But black people had the option of thwarting prejudice at movie theaters where owners regularly directed blacks to the balcony.

Neither of these giants rested on their laurels, even at retirement. Mitchell "retired" to the practice of law and to a seat on the Board of Regents of the University of Maryland System after he left the NAACP. Mays "retired" to the Atlanta Board of Education, on which he served first as a member, then as chairman during the difficult years when school desegregation continued to be a thorny issue. Only recently did he leave public life to begin another volume of memoirs.

The two giants fell in 1984. The impact of their lives and work will be felt always. For Clarence Mitchell, Jr. and Benjamin Mays each proved once again the truth of abolitionist Wendell Phillips' assertion that "One, on God's side, is a majority."

# On Behalf of Black Families

**by James L. Robinson**

*(The author is director of the Child Advocacy Program in the Department of Health and Human Services.)*

Over the past three years, many people have become aware of the crisis condition of black families. One third of the black families in the United States live in poverty; more than 47 percent of black children under 18 live in poverty; and well over half of the black families living in poverty are headed by women, who are paid less than men overall. Conferences, workshops, and other forums focusing on these problems have raised the "black family issue" to a prominent place on the national agenda.

Which is not to say that much has been done about it. Given all that is known about the plight of these families, the time has come to set forth a clear and comprehensive agenda for improving the condition of black families.

Clearly, there is a role for government in resolving the crisis of the black family—a role that no other entity in the society, no matter how well-intentioned, can play. Most fundamentally, the federal government must create a healthy economic environment in which domestic industry can expand to provide work for all who want it. For four decades, the U.S. economy has failed to provide what black families need most for their economic health—jobs.

But attempts to resolve the problems must be as wide-ranging and varied as the causes of the problems. In this article, I will concentrate on initiatives to be undertaken by black organizations, institutions, and individuals; the black community has always been an important source of help for the black family.

### A Unified Approach

Black organizations currently have many initiatives under way. But so far, there has been no central coordination of efforts, which could reduce duplication and overlap and maximize the return on investments of time, money, and energy. Furthermore, there is no national clearinghouse to disseminate information on concepts that work well in various sections of the country.

What is needed is a national program of support for black families, developed under the auspices of as many national black organizations and institutions as will lend their energy and support to the effort. This group should include black churches, colleges, fraternities, sororities, and political, social, professional, and civic organizations. Participating in this effort should not interfere with the activities for which these organizations are normally responsible.

For such a diverse group to form an effective coalition, differences among members must be put aside, and the coalition must emphasize collective effort in pursuit of a common goal—improving the chances of black families at risk.

The first step in such an undertaking should be the convening of a leadership meeting by a nonpartisan, noncompetitive organization. Participants in this initial meeting would determine the scope of activities to be undertaken and approve a program of action, the basic design of which should be settled before the gathering.

Specific tasks would be assigned to the organizations and institutions represented. For example, a nationwide organization of black women might be given responsibility for developing an instructional program on human sexuality, with emphasis on the preteen years. One of the national sororities could be charged to distribute and teach the program through its local chapters across the nation.

Similarly, a national fraternity might be asked to work closely with families that include school-age children whose well-being is threatened by drugs and alcohol. Special support for young black males to counteract the temptation of drug abuse may be especially needed in those families with female heads.

Little imagination is required to envision the range of support activities a local fraternity chapter could provide to families in need of help. And with each national fraternity assuming responsibility for a particular area of family life, the impact of this support could be hugely beneficial.

The church is deeply rooted in the black community; it is a familiar, local institution that is available during extended hours each day. So it seems eminently reasonable to expand its nurturing from the spiritual to encompass the earthly needs of black families. Churches could be used as "family resource centers," not necessarily delivering family services directly, but perhaps hiring *family advocates*, professionals who can assist families in obtaining needed help from both public and private agencies.

Black colleges, too, have traditionally played an important role in the progress of blacks and could serve a variety of functions in a national black family support program. Different institutions could assume responsibility for such activities as planning, data collection and analysis, running clearinghouses, and so on. Black colleges would help provide the intellectual energy to keep the effort focused, creative, and productive.

### What the Black Community Can Do Best

These are only examples and not an exhaustive list of precise roles and functions to be performed by national organizations. The needs of black families are extensive, and black institutions cannot address all of those needs. But there are some things they can do better than anyone else. Furthermore, some of this help can be provided more efficiently and more effectively in coalition with other black groups.

Regional meetings subsequent to the national meeting of the leadership group could establish lines of communication between regional and local affiliates, which would enable the leadership to understand issues unique to different sections of the country. Such understanding would permit fine-tuning of program activities.

We have the know-how to build a national program of support for black families; the challenge now is to put it to work. Such an effort will give weight to future demands that the public and private sectors come forward with more realistic support for the country's black families.

As long as so many black families remain at risk, the nation itself is at risk.

# Blacks on the Move

**by William O'Hare**

*(The author is a senior research associate at the Joint Center.)*

Recently released Census data on population movement between 1980 and 1982 show an increase in the rate of black suburbanization and an unexpected change in black population movement between regions.

In a recent study, the Joint Center examined black population shifts during the 1970s and reported two major trends: Blacks moved to the suburbs in increasing numbers, reducing the proportion of the black population living in central cities; and for the first time in many decades, blacks were moving from the North to the South. New data allow us to begin to assess how these trends are faring in the 1980s.

### From Central Cities to Suburbs

The movement of blacks out of central cities has increased dramatically since 1980. During each year of the late 1970s, about 233,000 blacks left central cities, while only 145,000 entered, resulting in a net out-migration of about 88,000 persons a year. In the first two years of the 1980s, the net out-migration of blacks from central cities exceeded 250,000 per year. And the out-migration was higher in 1981-82 than in 1980-81: 295,000 in 1981-82, compared to 260,000 in 1980-81.

Most of the blacks who left the central cities moved to suburbs rather than to rural areas. Black suburbanization, which started to increase in the 1970s, showed a dramatic increase in the early 1980s. Between 1975 and 1980, the suburbs received an average yearly net in-migration of 112,000 blacks, but between 1980 and 1981, they received about 208,000 and between 1981 and 1982, 318,000.

This increase may be due in part to differences between the patterns of mobility of blacks and whites. Whites are more likely to move long distances, while blacks are more prone to make short distance moves. As whites move from the northern suburbs to the South and West in search of jobs, they vacate homes that then become available to blacks who had been living in the central cities of the North.

But the increased black suburbanization reflects two distinct trends. Some blacks are moving from central cities into previously all white suburban neighborhoods and becoming reasonably well-integrated into those communities. This is a promising sign that racial barriers in housing may be weakening and that some black families are making economic progress sufficient to permit relocation to the most desirable suburbs.

However, in many cases, black suburbanization is simply the result of central-city black neighborhoods expanding across city boundaries and into the inner suburbs. This "spillover" is particularly evident in older suburbs that have begun to deteriorate, and it counters the notion that increased black suburbanization means that residential segregation by race has ended.

### Interregional Moves

While the pattern of black suburbanization seen in the 1970s has accelerated, the pattern of blacks' interregional movement slowed markedly in 1980-82—perhaps even changed direction.

In the 1970s, particularly in the late seventies, there was a pronounced movement of blacks into the South and out of the Northeast and North Central regions of the country. Between 1975 and 1980, there was an average net migration of 39,000 blacks into the South each year. During this same period, there was an average yearly net out-migration of 35,000 blacks per year from the Northeast and 10,000 per year from the North Central region.

Between 1980 and 1981, the North continued to lose blacks and the South continued to receive more black migrants than it lost. But between 1981 and 1982, that pattern was reversed: there was a small net out-migration of blacks from the South and a small net migration of blacks into the North. During the same year, whites continued and, in fact, increased their migration from the North to the South.

The figures for 1981-82 are too small to be statistically significant, and they could represent merely a temporary aberration. But they raise several questions: Was the movement of blacks into the South in the late 1970s simply an anomaly in long-term trends? Was the reversal in this trend prompted by economic considerations? Did those blacks who moved to the South in the late 1970s find it inhospitable? Are the blacks who moved to the South in the 1970s different in some significant way from those who are leaving the South in the early 1980s?

And if the black out-migration from the South during 1981-82 turns out to be a return to the trend that has existed for most of the twentieth century, there will be another important question to answer: Why are blacks migrating northward at the same time whites are pursuing expanding job opportunities in the South and West?

(*Blacks on the Move: A Decade of Demographic Change*, an in-depth study of black migration during the 1970s, is available for $4.95 from the Joint Center. Address orders to the Publications Clerk, Joint Center for Political Studies, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20004)

**Interregional migration of blacks, 1975-1982 (in 1,000s)**

| | Yearly Averages | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 75-80 | 80-81 | 81-82 |
| **Northeast** | | | |
| Blacks | −35 | −49 | 12 |
| Whites | −255 | −168 | −193 |
| **North Central** | | | |
| Blacks | −10 | −30 | 38 |
| Whites | −221 | −355 | −377 |
| **South** | | | |
| Blacks | 39 | 31 | −31 |
| Whites | 314 | 437 | 488 |
| **West** | | | |
| Blacks | 6 | 48 | −19 |
| Whites | 163 | 86 | 82 |

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, Nos. 368, 377, and 384.

# Telescope

**Congressional Committee on Cities Proposed**

Congressman William J. Coyne (D-PA) has proposed legislation to form a Select Committee on Cities to deal with the growing economic, social, and political pressures faced by today's urban areas. Currently, urban issues are handled under a variety of congressional committees: housing matters fall under Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs; mass transit issues, under Public Works and Transportation; employment, under Education and Labor; welfare, under Ways and Means, and so forth.

Stating that "the splintered legislative authority in the House over urban matters has contributed to the fact that many federal policies and programs pull in contrary directions," Coyne has called for a single committee that would address the problems of the cities more cohesively. The committee would be nonlegislative but authorized to conduct investigations and make recommendations. Its overall objective would be to examine the impact of federal government programs and policies on American cities; as such, it would examine a host of related issues such as demographic trends, infrastructures, fiscal policies, and methods of governing. It would report its findings and recommendations to the House within two years after its formation.

**JCPS Helps Cities in Arkansas and Florida**

The Joint Center's Community Development Program has helped secure more than $4.5 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for several cities in Florida and Arkansas since April 1983. The center provides assistance in competing for grants to small cities with significant minority populations, under a cooperative agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (see *Focus*, September 1983).

The center has helped five cities in Florida secure funding from Florida's small cities CDBG program: Appalachicola (sewer and drainage), $500,000; Kissimmee (water, sewers, drainage, flood control, and fire hydrants), $750,000; Marianna (housing rehabilitation), $282,000; Mt. Dora (sewer and drainage), $167,000; and two grants for Quincy (neighborhood and commercial revitalization and housing), at $650,000 each. Earlier, the center had helped three cities in Arkansas—Carthage, Haynes, and Lakeview—secure grants totaling more than $1.5 million.

**K mart Reaches Out to Minority Vendors**

One of many interesting presentations at the Fourth National Policy Institute in February was that given by Frederick M. Stevens, senior vice president for sales and general merchandising manager of the K mart Corporation, outlining K mart's efforts to find more minority vendors to supply its stores. K mart is willing to provide technical assistance at many phases of a product's development—from market analysis to packaging. It is willing to consider lower than usual profit margins in working with minority suppliers in early stages of development. And it can work in a limited distribution area with a vendor that is too small to supply the entire chain. James T. McKitrick, K mart's director of merchandising, has been designated minority vendor coordinator. Mr. McKitrick can be reached at K mart Corporation, 3100 West Big Beaver Road, Troy, Michigan, 48084; telephone (313) 643-5597.

**New Heads for Two BEO Organizations**

Mary Lett, former vice president of the National Caucus of Black School Board Members, has been elected president of the organization, succeeding William B. Ingram. She is president of the East Orange, New Jersey school board.

Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry has been elected president of the National Conference of Black Mayors, succeeding Johnny L. Ford, Sr., mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama.

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Special Report on Second Primaries
Also: New statistics on southern black voter registration

# FOCUS

# FOOD CRISIS IN AFRICA

Ruinous food shortages plague much of Africa; an administrator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture talks about American and African efforts to find short and long-term solutions.

# THE DEBT OF DEVELOPING NATIONS

**Third World countries owe more than $700 billion to the banks of the industrial world. How did such a debt pile up? How can it be managed?**

# *THE FOLLY OF THE SUB-MINIMUM WAGE*

**The Reagan administration and the National Conference of Black Mayors endorse the idea as a youth employment measure, but a noted social scientist says it's already been tried—and failed.**

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Joint Center for Political Studies

# Perspective

July 2 will mark the twentieth anniversary of President Johnson's signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a legislative landmark that required great effort to erect. Among other things, the act mandated equal access to public accommodations; authorized the Justice Department to sue to desegregate schools and public facilities; provided for the denial of federal funds to institutions that discriminate; outlawed discrimination in most places of employment; and called for affirmative action as relief for victims of unlawful employment discrimination. Beginning on June 28, the Joint Center will sponsor a two-day conference at the National Academy of Sciences to commemorate the anniversary of the act. "The Civil Rights Act: Two Decades Later" will be an occasion to assess the impact of the act and call attention to the unfinished civil rights agenda.

Coretta Scott King has agreed to serve as the honorary chairperson, and we will have as participants some of the nation's foremost civil rights advocates, scholars, and political analysts, including social psychologist Kenneth B. Clark; David Garrow, author of *Protest at Selma;* Vernon Jordan, former president of the National Urban League; pollster Louis Harris; and Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta.

In some ways, the social and economic indicators show a disheartening lack of progress over the past twenty years. As a recent Joint Center study showed, blacks as a group still earn 55 percent of what whites earn—almost exactly the same proportion as in 1964. Blacks also register to vote in almost the same proportions as two decades ago—about 60 percent—and many of the barriers to registration and voting that they confronted in 1964 still persist today. Affirmative action against racial discrimination, a concept that was introduced in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, is under strong attack again. We are discussing some of the same issues that were prominent twenty years ago—the crisis of the black family, to name one.

But these signs of stagnation are somewhat misleading. They mask very real and major changes that have occurred within the black community, as well as dramatic trends in the society as a whole.

Although black economic progress seems stagnant overall, there has developed both a sizable and fairly stable black middle class. At the same time, however, there has emerged a large group of black families headed by single females—more than half of which are in poverty. This polarization of the black community is one of the most significant developments of the past quarter century; its implications have not yet been adequately explored. There has also been real progress in the accumulation of black wealth as compared to white wealth—but from a much lower base, so that black families still have only one-third the wealth of whites. But, perhaps most significant, the trends of the last two decades have not been flat: progress *was* made up through the late 1970s; it has been eclipsed by precipitous declines since then.

Likewise, there has been political and social progress as well as inertia. The number of black elected officials has grown continually, if not always dramatically. Public school segregation has decreased markedly in the South (although it has increased in the North). Many forms of discrimination are simply unacceptable to most Americans today.

At the same time, American society as a whole has changed. The anti-discrimination approaches of the Civil Rights Act have been expanded to many other groups, including Hispanics, women, the handicapped, and the aged. The industrial base of our economy is giving way to a technological and service base, and no one is sure of all the ramifications of this development. The Joint Center's conference will explore the act in light of these historical changes.

Participants will describe the objectives of the Civil Rights Act and chart the change over the past two decades in public attitudes towards those objectives; examine how the act has affected the socioeconomic and educational status of blacks; and discuss changes in the political context of the civil rights struggle and the evolution of minority politics since the act was passed.

I hope many of you will join us for this important conference (see page 7 for other details).

**Eddie N. Williams**
**President**

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# Food Crisis in Africa

**by Joan S. Wallace**

*(The author is administrator of the Office of International Cooperation and Development, U.S Department of Agriculture.)*

More than 600 million people worldwide lack sufficient food to meet their basic nutritional needs. One child in four born in the developing countries dies before the age of five, usually of malnutrition. Each year, 100,000 children go blind from a lack of vitamin A. These are the dimensions of the world's food problem.

Nowhere is the problem more serious than in Africa. In most of the developing world, food production has outpaced population growth, but in Africa, per capita food production has actually declined in recent years. Of all the continents, Africa has the largest percentage of hungry people in its population.

Even the casual visitor can readily see the devastating impact of hunger and malnutrition. Disease is rampant in many nations. Hunger impairs its victims physically and mentally, rendering them unable to help themselves and reducing life expectancy to less than 50 years.

Food shortages have plagued Africa in the past, but the situation today is especially perilous. The worst drought of the century has ruined the crops of African farmers. For the past three years, this drought has hit more countries than ever before; in past crises (in the Sahel in 1972-74 and eastern Africa in 1980-81), the emergency was more limited in scope. Countries that normally export food to their neighbors in southern Africa are now critically short themselves.

The food supplies of some 23 countries—with a combined population of more than 225 million—are threatened. About 9 million people face an immediate crisis and many have already died of starvation. Recently, leaders of six African nations appealed directly to over 150 U.S. relief organizations for help in meeting this emergency.

**Obstacles**

What is preventing the African nations from building their food supplies? There is, of course, no single obstacle. The primary problem is poverty. Modern agriculture requires investments in technology, research, machinery, and training that most African nations cannot afford. But there are other, less obvious, factors curtailing African food output as well.

Among these are the weather and a lack of arable land. Three-quarters of Africa below the Sahara is too dry for farming without irrigation, and few countries have water management systems that enable them to use their meager supplies effectively. This makes sustained production extremely difficult for African farmers.

Storage and distribution are two other major stumbling blocks. Foreign food shipments are limited because there is so little storage capacity in the recipient countries. Existing facilities are plainly inadequate and they allow significant losses from insects. And with few paved roads in the outlying regions of some countries, it is virtually impossible to deliver food to the rural areas where the need is often greatest. Similarly, rural farmers often cannot deliver their harvest to city markets before it spoils. A Tanzanian official once told me that his country lost 60 percent of some crops because of inadequate storage and distribution.

A lack of foreign exchange (hard currency) limits the amount of food that many African countries can buy to satisfy their needs. Since few of these countries have industries capable of earning large amounts of hard currency, the purchase of needed foodstuffs is difficult.

In some African nations, agriculture is not the highest priority—resources are severely limited and sometimes industry or public health gets more attention. In others, food problems are compounded by government corruption, warfare, revolution, or political strife. Some nations have opted for policies that subsidize food for urban consumers rather than stimulating stronger production by offering farmers better prices. These policies encourage reliance on imported food and aid rather than strengthening self-reliance. Fortunately, though, most African nations have been wise enough to give food production high priority.

**Seeking Solutions**

Agricultural development in Africa will take a long time. It will require a concerted effort by developed countries, by international organizations such as the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), by private voluntary groups such as CARE and Catholic Relief Services, black groups, and the Africans themselves.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has provided other countries with $165 billion in economic assistance, of which more than $113 billion has been outright grants or gifts. We have also pledged increasing amounts of food to international efforts such as the World Food Program. Last year, we pledged a record $250 million to that program—14 percent more than in the preceding year. We have also made surplus commodities available to private organizations such as CARE for feeding needy people abroad.

U.S. economic assistance to Africa amounted to $880 million last fiscal year, and, because of the food crisis, this figure increased to $1.15 billion in fiscal '84. This increase comes at a time when many other government programs are being cut or held at the same funding levels.

Recently, FAO called on all nations to contribute additional food and economic assistance to African countries in the wake of the serious drought there. To help meet this goal, the U.S. government earmarked $138 million worth of emergency food aid for Africa last fiscal year and has increased this figure to $222 million so far this fiscal year.

However, food aid is at best a temporary solution. It is the long and hard process of agricultural development that holds promise for Africa. At last year's World Food Council Ministerial meeting in New York, the Agriculture Ministers of both Kenya and Lesotho emphasized that aid is not the ultimate answer and that a long-term commitment to sound development policies is needed. The African nations must have strong agricultural policies and develop expertise in research, marketing, and management.

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The agriculture ministers of African nations met last year at a regional conference sponsored by FAO and committed themselves to greater efforts under the new Lagos Plan of Action. This plan, devised by and for Africans, aims at building agricultural trade within the continent, creating national food reserves, removing barriers to production, and ending dependence on food from outside sources.

The keys to successful development are effective technical assistance and training. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers such assistance and training through its Office of International Cooperation and Development (OICD). Last year, OICD sent over 975 technicians to 85 countries to promote agricultural development under agreements with the Agency for International Development (AID), international organizations, and foreign governments. Its projects involve everything from nutrition to food marketing. But they all have one common goal—helping developing nations to help themselves.

OICD nutritionists have worked with the Egyptians on fortifying wheat to prevent anemia and with the Nigerians on improving weaning foods. In the Sahel, OICD has worked on regional food crop production and financial management for agricultural development projects. In Kenya, we have researched dryland cropping and projects to improve livestock and range management. Several of our African projects focus on the need for more fuelwood, the lack of which has become a critical problem in many parts of the continent. All told, there are over 40 OICD technical assistance projects to help African nations provide food for their people.

OICD also offers training and education in agriculture and rural development to foreign administrators, ministry officials, scientists, and technicians. More than 70,000 agriculturists from the developing world have taken part in these USDA programs since 1950. Offerings range from short-term technical training to coordinating study by foreign students at U.S. colleges and universities. Foreign governments, AID, and international organizations fund this training.

Other OICD projects involve work with international organizations that seek to overcome world food problems. These organizations include the development banks, the World Food Program, World Food Council, and FAO. The United States makes substantial contributions to these organizations and works closely with them. The United States initiated FAO's postharvest loss prevention program and has strongly supported its soil management and fertilizer programs. We have also lent support to FAO efforts to combat plant and animal diseases. All of these projects are of great importance to Africa.

**Involving U.S. Blacks**

We must not forget that the black experience in some nations is one of hunger and deprivation on a scale rarely found in the United States. Black scientists, educators, and researchers here should have a special interest in helping to solve the problems afflicting blacks in other nations.

American blacks must commit themselves to making a difference. We have an obligation to those overseas who are burdened daily by famine, food shortages, and malnutrition. Countless Africans have watched their children die in the Sahel and in Ethiopia in the last decade. Even in good years, many have never known the comfort of having enough to eat, of life without the fear of starvation.

Successful international development is predicated on meeting the needs of blacks, Asians, Latin Americans—people whose cultures are far different from the majority culture in America. The history of international development is scarred by the failure to appreciate these cultural differences; for this reason, it is particularly important that minorities play a larger role in development.

For example, opportunities exist today for historically black colleges in overseas projects. Institutions like Tuskegee, Southern, and Prairie View have been teaching agricultural techniques to small farmers for decades, and the farmers of Africa and the Caribbean usually work small plots of land. Not long ago, OICD hosted a conference to familiarize its staff with the resources available at the nation's historically black colleges; this, we hope, will result in greater involvement for these institutions in USDA's international programs.

Other efforts are also under way to include minorities and women in development projects: AID recently provided a grant to the Booker T. Washington Foundation to establish links between American and African blacks so that, together, they might explore possible solutions to socioeconomic problems; and OICD has begun giving special attention to the training of women, since so many farmers in developing nations are women. OICD also offers special courses for women managers from developing countries.

Private and religious organizations have also played a major role in fostering development and providing food to the needy overseas. Much of the food the U.S. government donates is handled by private voluntary groups. The names of these groups are all familiar: CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief, and Church World Services are just a few. All of these groups rely on donations and volunteers.

There is much work to be done in Africa, and U.S. blacks—like all Americans—have an obligation to help. We must support voluntary organizations and seek a greater role in development programs. Above all, we must take a greater role within the institutions that set development policy.

## . . . Subminimum Wage

(Continued from page 12)

the American economy. Initiatives such as the Boston Compact, the New York Partnership Summer Employment Program, and the Philadelphia Urban Coalition Summer Employment Program demonstrate that important gains can be made to get youth into private sector jobs under current employment and training policies. Programs like these ought to be supported and expanded.

The national policy objective should be to elevate low-skilled youth to a point where they can earn a decent wage, not diminish our wage standards on the erroneous claim that to do so will lower the teenage unemployment rate.